

'You Say Slovenia, I Say Slovakia'

A celebration of new literature in English from both countries

Thursday, 13th September 2018 at 6.30pm
at Europe House

Panel discussion with the authors of
A Swarm of Dust **Evald Flisar** (Slovenia)
and *Gaudeamus* **Dr Richard Vesely** (Slovakia),
translator of Vilikovsky's novella *Fleeting Snow* **Julia Sherwood**,
Istros Books publisher **Susan Curtis**
and **Mike Tate** from Jantar Publishing
Chaired by **Roy Cross** from the British Council.

Gaudeamus by Richard

Richard's first novel, 'Gaudeamus' (Let us rejoice!), is set in Slovakia from the mid-1970s onwards. The unloved wife of an 'unofficial doctor' comes across his medical notes after his death. One 'unofficial patient' has severe problems coming to terms with the disappearance and murder of his childhood sweetheart. Historical fact, murder and mourning combine delicately in a tale of love, loss, redemption and joy.

Richard (Dr Richard Veselý), like the main character of his novel 'Gaudeamus', has dedicated most of his life to the medical profession. A paediatric specialist, he worked as clinical head of department at the University Children's Hospital in Košice and published number of scientific papers on his chosen medical specialty. Richard now works in London. Before writing his first novel, his literary activities ranged from occasional poetry reading on Slovak Radio to chairing judging panels for national poetry recital competitions in his native Slovakia. He has directed several theatre productions and has written reviews and commentaries for the Slovak literary journal 'Javisko'.

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A Swarm of Dust by Evald Flisar

Nominated for Kresnik Award 2018 (the Slovenian "Booker")

Born into a Roma family in 1960s' Yugoslavia, Janek Hudorovec has grown up with a terrible secret. Given the opportunity to 'make something of himself', he abandons the familiar wild and tactile world of nature and enters the controlled, rational life of university and the city. Here Janek proves himself to be not a conscious rebel but a spontaneous one; under the influences of impulses he cannot control. While his teachers try to understand and categorize him, it is only his fellow student, Daria, who seems able to provide a rational insight into the causes of his behaviour and offer him true affection. Yet the battle that Janek must fight with his past leads him back to the gypsy village, and a terrible denouement.

Evald Flisar is the most widely translated Slovenian author and playwright (173 translations in 41 languages), with stage and radio plays produced in 36 countries. He is the former editor of an encyclopaedia of science in London, president of the Slovene Writers' Association (1995-2002), and since 1998, the editor-in-chief of the oldest Slovenian literary magazine *Sodobnost* (The Contemporary Review).

Fleeting Snow by Pavel Vilikovský

Pavel Vilikovský's novella 'Fleeting Snow' (Letmý sneh, 2014) is full of gentle reminiscences about a life shared, as the narrator looks back on a long marriage and muses on issues ranging from human nature and the soul, to names and the phonetics of Slovak and indigenous American Indian languages. The book deals with the subject of memory loss in an informal, humorous style whose lightness of touch belies the seriousness of his themes.

Pavel Vilikovský (b. 1941) is one of the most important writers of post-Communist Central Europe. He studied film directing in Prague and, later, English and Slovak at Bratislava's Comenius University. One of Slovakia's most distinctive narrative voices, he published only two books *under communism - Education in March (1965)* and *The First Sentence of Sleep (1983)*, preferring self-imposed silence to self-censorship and working for many years as a literary editor and translator from English. However, since 1989 he has published over a dozen books, including *The Last Horse of Pompeii (2001)* and *The Autobiography of Evil (2009)*. In 1997 Vilikovský won the Vilenica Award for Central European Literature, and he has been twice awarded Slovakia's leading literary prize, the Anasoft *Litera*: in 2006 for *The Magic Parrot and Other Kitschy Stories* and in 2014 for *First and Last Love*.

Julia and Peter Sherwood are based in London and work as freelance translators from and into a number of Central and East European languages. Julia Sherwood was born and grew up in Bratislava, Slovakia, and spent more than twenty years in the NGO sector in London before turning to freelance translation some ten years ago. She is Asymptote's editor-at-large for Slovakia. Julia and Peter Sherwood's joint book-length translations into English include works by Balla, Daniela Kapitáňová, Uršula Kovalyk, Peter Krištúfek (from the Slovak), Hubert Klimko-Dobrzaniecki (Polish), and Petra Procházková (Czech).

Susan Curtis is the Founding Director of Istros Books, an independent publisher of contemporary literature from Central and South East Europe, based in Bloomsbury, London. Istros Books was set up in 2011 to showcase the very best of literature - both fiction and non-fiction- from the region to a new audience of English speakers, bringing the best of European writing through quality translation. Its authors include European prizewinners, polemic journalists turned crime writers and social philosophers turned poets. Besides Flisar's novels *My Father's Dreams (2015)*, *Three Loves, One Death (2016)* and *A Swarm of Dust (2018)*, Istros has also published books by several other major contemporary Slovenian authors including Gabriela Babnik (*Dry Season, 2015*), Mojca Kumerdej (*The Harvest of Chronos, 2017*), Jela Krečič (*None Like Her, 2016*), Dušan Šarotar (*Panorama, 2016*), Aleš Šteger (*Absolution, 2017*), Goran Vojnović (*Yugoslavia, My Fatherland, 2015*) and book of contemporary philosophers Slavoj Žižek titled *What does Europe Want? (2013)*

Michael Tate is the Founder of Jantar Publishing, an independent publisher of European fiction and poetry based in London. Richard is one of three Slovak authors published by Jantar. The others being Balla (*In the Name of The Father 2017* and *The Great Love 2019*) and Ivana Dobrakovová (*Bellevue 2019*). Born in Nigeria, he returned with his family to the UK when he was a teenager where he obtained a degree in Czech with Slovak from University College London. Michael reviews fiction and poetry for the LA Review of Books and has participated in a number of public literary discussions, radio interviews and podcasts. He has a special interest in the Czechoslovak Underground cultural movement and has collaborated with The Plastic People of The Universe, among others, translating poetry and song lyrics into English and producing events.

Roy Cross is a Senior Adviser for Partnerships & Evaluation at the British Council. He is also the former Director of the British Council Nordics & Baltics, Scotland and Croatia. He takes a great interest in European culture and literature and has chaired a number of author talks.